UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
Archaeological Services

Archaeological work at The Stable Block, Nevill Holt Hall, Nevill Holt, Leicestershire (SP 816 937)

Leon Hunt

ULAS Report No 2016-142

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for

Rural Solutions Planning Consultants

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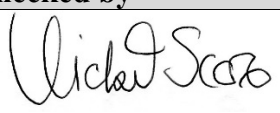
2016-142	**Vicki Score** 	**22/08/2016**

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Archaeological work at The Stable Block, Nevill Holt Hall, Nevill Holt, Leicestershire (SP 816 937)

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Summary

Archaeological work has been carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) at Stable Block, Nevill Holt Hall, Leicestershire (SP 816 937) in advance of the removal of a temporary opera house structure and its replacement by a permanent structure that would include the deepening of the current orchestra pit within the stable courtyard, and other excavations that would most likely destroy the extant archaeological remains within the site.

The work was required as a mitigation strategy by Planning Archaeologists for Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological advisors to the planning authority and was commissioned by Rural Solutions Planning Consultants.

Nevill Holt Hall comprises a complex set of buildings, with origins in the 13th century. The stable block is also a complex structure, dating from the 17th and 19th centuries with many changes and alterations, and most likely built on the footprint of an earlier hospital.

A series of archaeological investigations carried out during renovation work on the Hall between 2000-2004 and on the stable block between 2005-2006, recorded walls and surfaces possibly related to earlier features.

The new work involved the archaeological monitoring of the stripping of the courtyard down to archaeological layers or natural sub-stratum in advance of the next stage of work and the recording of a number of exploratory test pits in and around the stable block.

The test pits revealed information on the various foundations of the stable buildings and the stripping of the courtyard revealed a number of features that had previously been revealed. These were recorded in greater detail before their eventual destruction.

Part of a previously unrecorded wall was revealed within the south-eastern room of the stable block.

The archive for this work will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A112.2016.

Introduction

University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) were commissioned by Rural Solutions Planning Consultants to carry out a controlled strip and excavation at the Stable Block, Nevill Holt Hall, Leicestershire (NGR: SP 816 937).

This archaeological work is in accordance with NPPF Section 12: Enhancing and Conserving the Historic Environment.

Previous work on the site during the construction of a temporary structure to develop an opera house within the stable block revealed a number of archaeological features, including walls, surfaces, pits and a well.

Context of the Project

Planning permission is being sought for the removal of the temporary structure and creation of a permanent structure within the courtyard of the stable building. This will involve further excavation of the interior courtyard and that would include the widening of the current orchestra pit as well as other excavations and associated groundworks. Discussion with the Principal and Senior Planning Archaeologists for Leicestershire County Council, as archaeological advisors to the planning authority, have agreed a mitigation strategy consisting of the following phases:

1. A controlled archaeological strip of the main courtyard area corresponding to the intending ground reduction to form the auditorium, enlarged orchestra pit and the associated access/fire escape to the north-east,

2. Archaeological investigation and recording of exposed remains above, at and, where necessary to respond to the development impact, below the intended formation level'

3. Archaeological monitoring of services, and other discrete groundworks forming part of the scheme, outside the footprint of the works outlined in controlled strip under archaeological supervision of the area affected followed by a phase of excavation and recording.

Site Location, Geology and Topography

Nevill Holt is a small village in the Harborough District of Leicestershire. It lies at the very south-eastern edge of the county, close to the border with both Rutland and Northamptonshire. The nearest large towns are Market Harborough, which lies 8 miles to the south-west, and Corby, which lies 8 miles to the south-east (Figure 1).

The Hall and church, both dating from the 13th century, stand on a hilltop, dominating the cluster of houses that make up the village. The Hall itself is a complex building, covering many periods (Figure 2).

The stables lie to the east of the main hall and were built in the late 17th century and then expanded in the 19th century.

The hill on which the Hall stands overlooks the River Welland to the south, and is at a height of approximately 140m OD. The underlying geology consists of Lower Lincolnshire Limestone, below clays (O.S. Geological Survey of Great Britain Sheet 170).

Archaeological Aims and Objectives

The archaeological investigations will be considered in light of the Archaeology of the East Midlands: An Archaeological Resource Assessment and Research Agenda (Cooper 2006) and East Midlands Heritage: An updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands (Knight *et al*. 2012).

The archaeological work could contribute towards the questions in sections 7 and 8.2 Landscapes of Display: country houses and gardens of the Updated Research Agenda and in particular could contribute to the following Research Objectives:

7F Investigate development, structure and landholdings of manorial estate centres

8D Investigate development in estate and garden design and their landscape contexts

8I Develop further the study of ceramic assemblages.

These research aims have been identified based on the current state of knowledge within the development site. The research aims will be re-assessed and updated during the course of the fieldwork.

The purpose of the archaeological work may be summarised as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits and provide further clarification of the nature and extent of surviving archaeological remains on the site.
- To characterise more fully the extent, date range and significance of any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To excavate and record significant archaeological deposits whose future integrity may be compromised by groundworks associated with the proposed construction works.
- To relate any archaeological deposits uncovered to the existing standing buildings on the site where feasible
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

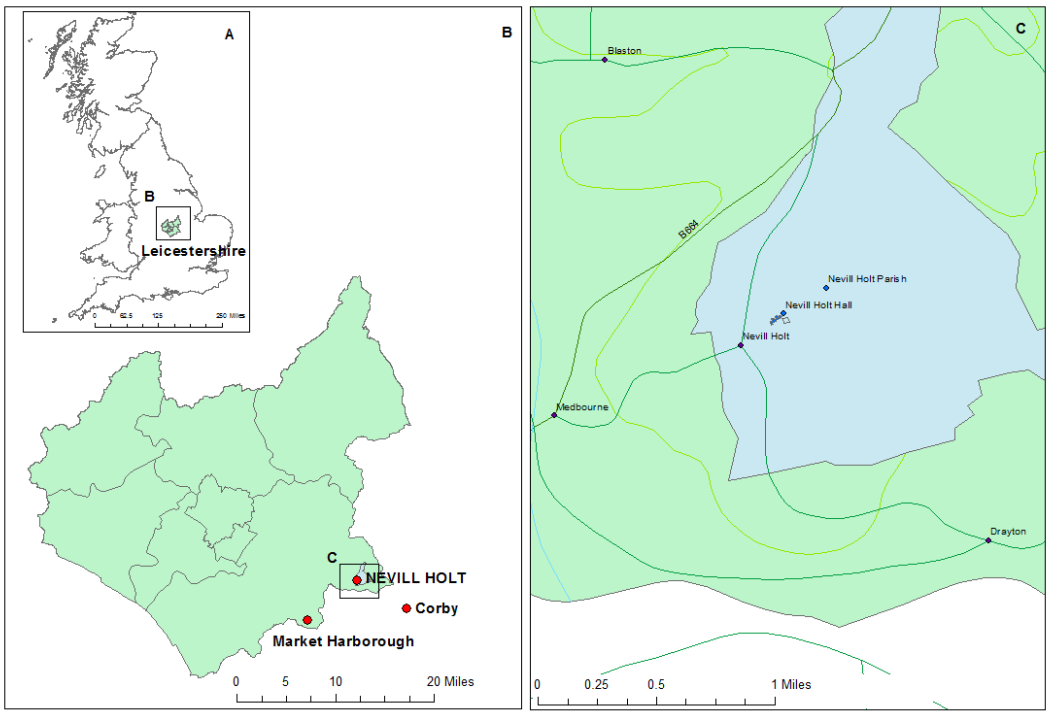

Figure 1: Location of Nevill Holt Hall

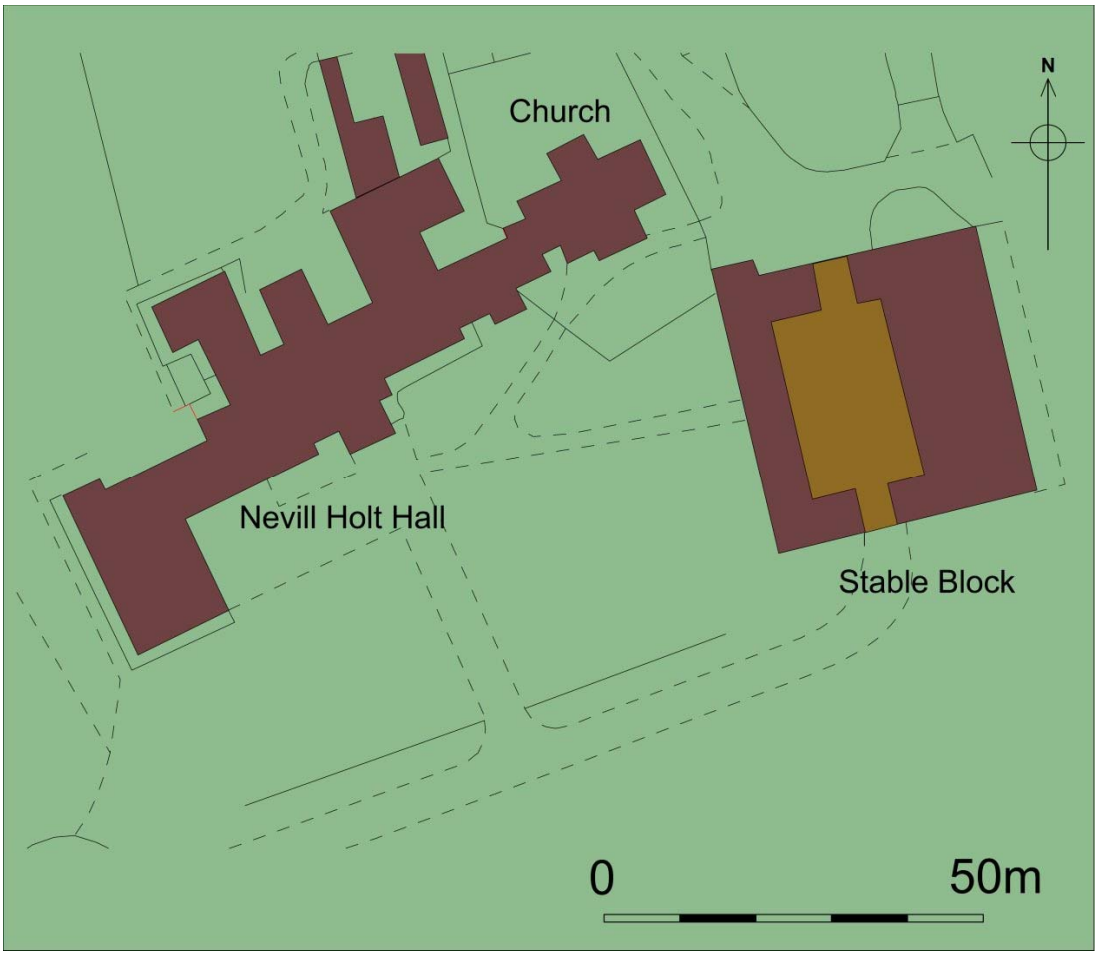

Figure 2: Plan of Nevill Holt Hall and Stable Block

Historical Background

It is not clear when the village of 'Holt' was founded. It is not mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086, and it is thought that the settlement may have been started in the 12th or 13th centuries, beginning of the clearing of the woods from which the place-name of Holt is derived (Hill 1999).

The prefix of 'Nevill' is a reference to the Nevill family, who occupied the Hall for around 400 years from the 15th century until 1868.

Nevill Holt Hall is an extensive and very complex country house with a broadly east to west orientation (Figure 3). Its origins appear to date from the 13th century and there is evidence that there was a large establishment of buildings on the site by 1302 (Hill 1997).

Figure 3: The Hall and Church from the south-east, looking north-west

The earliest phase of the buildings is the core of a stone-walled medieval hall, which dates from around 1280 and still retains its original timber framed roof that lies in the centre of the modern structure.

By 1400 the main structure comprised an elongated series of buildings, including the Hall, Solar Crosswing, Inner Hall, Service, Service/Corridor Gallery and St Mary's Church, probably with a number of outbuildings (Hill 1997). There were many later editions to the medieval core during the 15th to 19th centuries.

Since 2001 the house has seen a number of extensive renovations and has been the subject of a programme of archaeological monitoring and building recording for much of the intermediate time.

The stable block also covers many periods (Figure 4). The west wing dates from the 1661 when it appears to have been built on top of the ruins of an old medieval 'Hospitall'; an almshouse of unknown date and origin (Hill 1997). The previous stables, which lay to the south of the Hall, according to the 1661 plan, were demolished (Figure 5). The remainder of the current stable building dates from the late 19th century, after the Hall passed into the hands of Sir Bache Cunard in 1877. Sir Bache was Master of Fox Hounds from 1878 to 1888 and expanded the stables in line with his new position.

Figure 4: The west wing of the stable block, with statue of Bryn Terfel, from the south-west, looking north

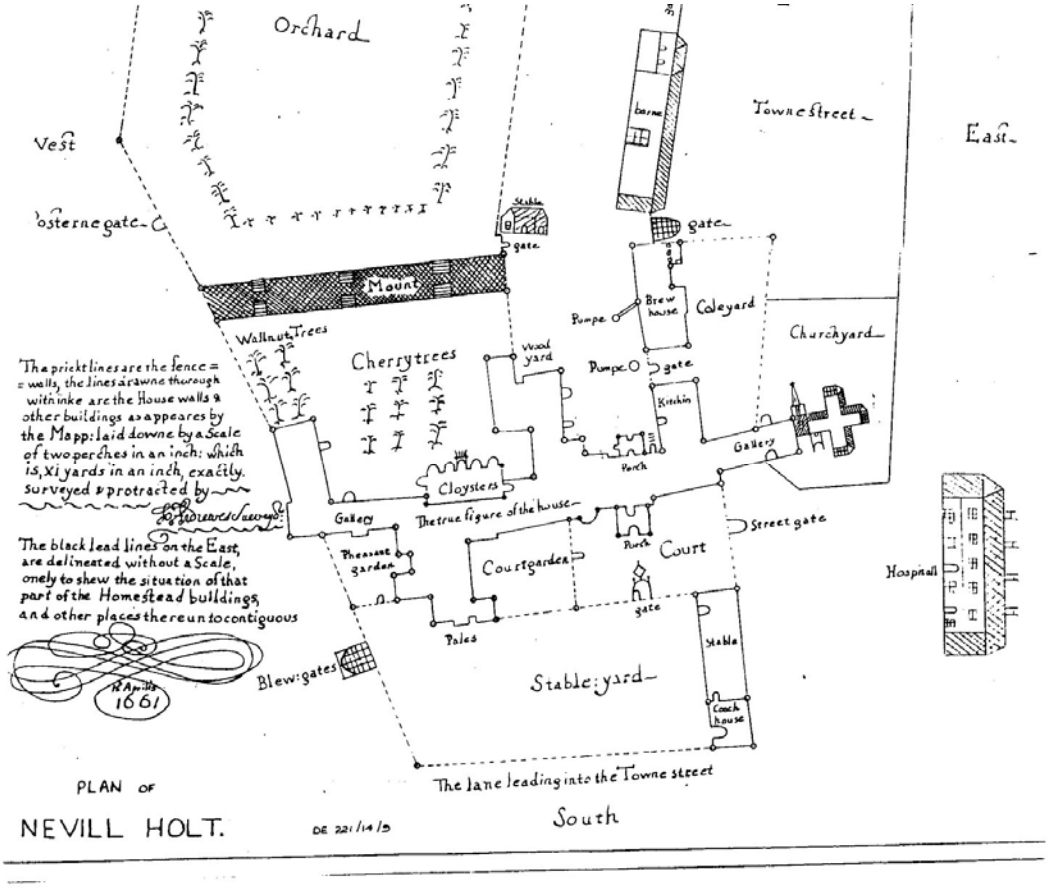

Figure 5: Detail of Plan of Hall from 1661 by Malcolm Saunders, showing position of Hospital, southern stableyard and 'Blew Gates'

The hall was converted into a school after World War I and there were many modifications to the stable buildings in the 1960s, including the construction of a gymnasium and swimming pool within the stable buildings. A new classroom had also been constructed in the northwest corner of the courtyard and a series of lean-to buildings had been attached to the outer wall of the eastern wing. Both of these constructions had been demolished shortly before the archaeological work in 2004.

Archaeological Background

Nevill Holt Hall

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by ULAS in 2000 (Priest 2000). This revealed a number of archaeological deposits present within the hall itself, including the remains of an earlier floor surface and a large post-hole, located beneath the present flagstones of the Great Hall. Test pits within the Inner Hall revealed further evidence for earlier structures, in the form of a beaten earth floor and the remains of a stone wall, with traces of plaster (Priest 2000).

A second phase of work was carried out by ULAS during 2002-2003 (Clarke 2004). The watching brief revealed a number of further discoveries including the remains of a mortar surface within the former dairy block, which was removed to reveal a number of stakeholes and post-holes, which may be interpreted as evidence of earlier structures existing beneath the present building. Gravel stripping undertaken in the vicinity of the

present driveway, to the south of the Great Hall, revealed a series of cobbled surfaces that appear to correspond with the main Courtyard that appears on the 1661 plan of Nevill Holt (Figure 5). A substantial segment of sandstone walling revealed in a drainage trench located to the southwest of the Hall may represent the remains of a structure associated with the 'Blew-Gates', also noted on the plan of 1661, whilst a second wall revealed in a trench to the north of the Cloisters may relate to the Orchard boundary recorded at this time. Brick and stonework foundations recorded within gardens to the rear of the Kitchen, may represent the remains of recently demolished, late 19th-century greenhouses.

The Stable Block- eastern wing

The watching brief carried out by ULAS in 2004 on geotechnical trenches in and around the Stable Block in preparation for the construction of a new swimming pool revealed no archaeological features (Hunt 2004).

Further work in and around the stable block was carried out during 2005-2006 during the construction of a new swimming pool within the 19th century wing of the building and the construction of the temporary opera house structure; including the excavation of an orchestra pit, plus service trenches and other groundworks.

The eastern 19th-century wing of the stable block had contained a swimming pool associated with the hall's previous use as a private school. This had been removed before work had started leaving building debris and remnants of concrete foundations. Approximately 4 metres of the northern end of this room had already been reduced before the watching brief commenced, and some services had already been replaced. A new room had been constructed over this section. The floor level was reduced during the watching brief by 0.20-0.40m. This exposed the lower courses of the inner walls of the stable block, which were of Ironstone, whereas the upper courses were brick (Hunt 2005, 2006).

The small room at the far southern end of the building was reduced to a similar level, except in one corner where a rectangular area, measuring 1.3 x 1.6m was excavated to a depth of 0.8m. This exposed 3 courses of foundations in stone, supporting upper brick courses laid in a similar pattern to the larger room.

The ground reduction did not penetrate deep enough to expose virgin ground and the floor surface as exposed remained strewn with building debris. No earlier phases of flooring or buildings were revealed within the eastern wing of the stables.

The Stable Block- the courtyard

Four test pits were placed in the southern end of the courtyard prior to the full excavation of the area in preparation for the temporary structure and orchestra pit. Shortly after an evaluation of the northern part of the courtyard (which was to contain the orchestra pit) was undertaken.

Test pit one contained a steep sided pit or post-hole, broadly oval in shape and approximately 0.5m in diameter. It appeared to be formed of two components: an initial cut [10], containing a mid-greyish brown clayey sand fill (11) with few medium sized

angular stones and some charcoal flecks and a secondary deeper cut [12] containing a fill (13), which was very similar to (11). Both fills contained sherds of medieval pottery.

Test pit three contained a stone feature (45) that consisted of two pitched blocks of Weldon stone, lying broadly north-south across the pit (Fig.7). To the west of these was a light grey mortar spread (5), which may have been a floor make-up layer.

Test pit four also contained a thin mortar layer (17), similar to (5), along with a group of large sub-rounded cobbles (46), which may have represented a former courtyard surface. Test pit two contained no archaeological features.

Figure 6: Plan of stable block with archaeological remains and test pit locations from the 2006 work (from Hunt 2006)

The evaluation within the northern end of the stable block courtyard area revealed a series of walls and other features (Figures 7 & 8). A large brick built cess-pit or water tank (32) was situated at the northern end of the stable block a few metres from the northwest wing.

Figure 7: Work in progress on northern end of courtyard from 2005-6, looking north-west

Later, when the tank was demolished, it was seen that the inner sides of the tank were smooth and appeared to have been rendered. The tank appeared to be at least 3 metres deep and was partially filled with water and sludge.

The tank was situated between the remains of two stone-built walls (25) and (33), which ran east to west across the courtyard. These were constructed of roughly hewn ironstone blocks, bonded together with lime mortar. Small sections of wall (26), (27), (28) running north to south were butted up against this wall, but had been truncated by the tank. One section, despite truncation, appeared to continue under the northwest wing of the stable block (26). The northernmost wall (25) had been partially damaged by a modern concrete foundation wall (30), which had held the previously demolished school building. This northern wall continued to a corner (31) and then turned south to be damaged by the water tank.

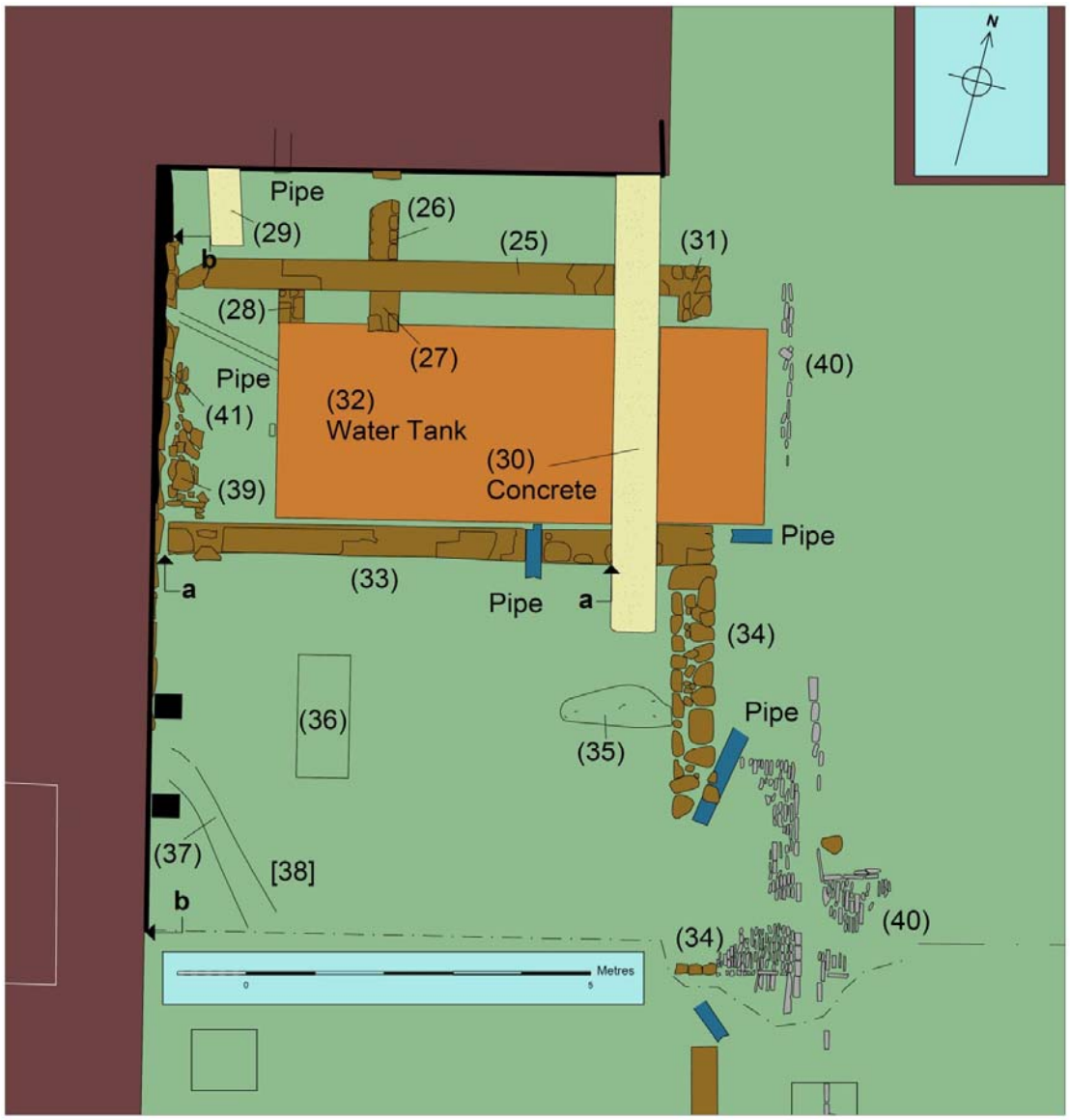

Figure 8: Plan of archaeological remains in northern end of stable block courtyard from 2005-2006.

Parallel to the northern wall was another east-west orientated wall (33), of similar construction, some 5 metres to the south. This too was partially damaged at its eastern end by the concrete wall (30) and a series of drains. This wall joined on to another, wider wall (34) running north to south down the middle of the stable yard. This had also been damaged by the tank (32) and had been heavily truncated by a large drain at its southern end, although it did appear to continue under the courtyard surface. This wall was wider than the east-west walls and was made of large roughly hewn ironstone blocks and appeared to continue on the same alignment as the northeast corner, and parallel to the west wing of the stable block.

The east-west walls butted up against the foundations of the 17th century stable block (41), but at their eastern end they appeared to be attached to the north-south wall. To the west of the north-south wall was a small patch of mortar (35), which may have been the remnants of a floor make-up layer.

On the eastern side of the north-south wall was a large patch of roughly cobbled surface (40), which ran in patches back towards the northern end of the site. This was

constructed of roughly squared-off rectangular limestone blocks, pitched and not mortared. In places it appears to have been repaired with brick. This surface seemed to respect the line of the north-south wall. There also seemed to be remnants of floor surface (39) close to the stable foundations (41).

An irregular shaped pit was discovered within the large open area to the west of the larger wall (36). This contained a large amount of horse bones and two horseshoes. A narrow linear feature [38] was uncovered running northwest to southeast across this area. This contained a fill (37) of fine brownish-yellow sand.

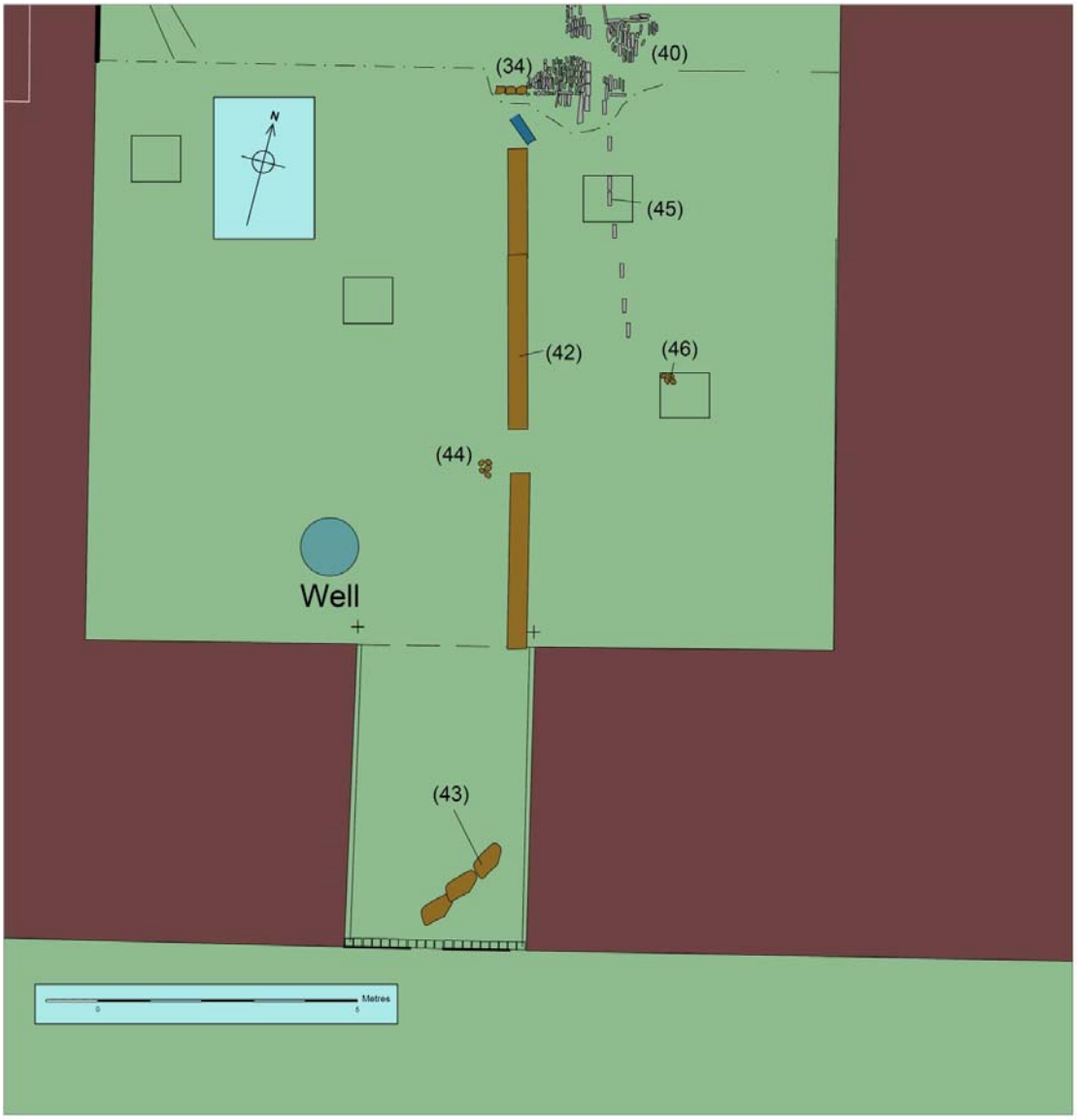

Figure 9: Plan of archaeological remains in southern end of stable block courtyard from 2005-2006

The southern end of the courtyard was later excavated to the level agreed after the test pits and evaluation (Figure 9). For the most part the stripping revealed hardcore and patches of soil, but close to the southern archway entrance of the stable block a small section of wall (43) was revealed. This consisted of rough pieces of ironstone, apparently not mortared and aligned northeast- southwest across the entranceway. The

foundations of the southeast wing could also be seen under the present surface level as they jutted out approximately 0.2m into the entranceway.

Running from the north-west corner of the south-eastern wing on a similar alignment to these foundations a mortared ironstone wall was revealed (42). This ran for 10.2 metres towards the middle of the courtyard, with a short hiatus around the middle section. It had been damaged at its northern end by a ceramic drain, but it appeared to continue towards the north-south aligned walls discovered during the evaluation.

The stripping of this area also showed the pitched stone surface (40) continuing into the southern side of the courtyard. A group of large cobbles were also discovered (44), which were very similar to those in test pit 4 (46).

A brick well, most likely modern in origin lay around 2m north of the south-western wing of the stables within the courtyard. This was later demolished, filled and covered in concrete.

A large soakaway, measuring 8m x 4m, was excavated to the southeast of the stable block to a depth of 2m. A series of trenches were also dug close to the walls of the east wall of the east wing of the stables where the foundations were to be underpinned. A watching brief was also carried out on the excavation of a number of service trenches within and outside the courtyard, but in all cases no archaeology was discovered.

The northern area was later the subject of a watching brief during the excavation of the orchestra pit. The southernmost wall (33) seen during the previous work was revealed and was recorded. The north-south wall (34) was also observed, and it was confirmed that the previously observed course of this feature was the only remaining course. The drain, which ran north-south across the stable yard, and seen during the evaluation, was also uncovered and a small sherd of datable pottery discovered. This was a piece of slipware, which was dated to the 17th century.

The archaeological features were subsequently removed and the orchestra pit was excavated to the final formation levels of *c*.1.2m, below the finished ground level. No further archaeological finds or features were observed during these excavations.

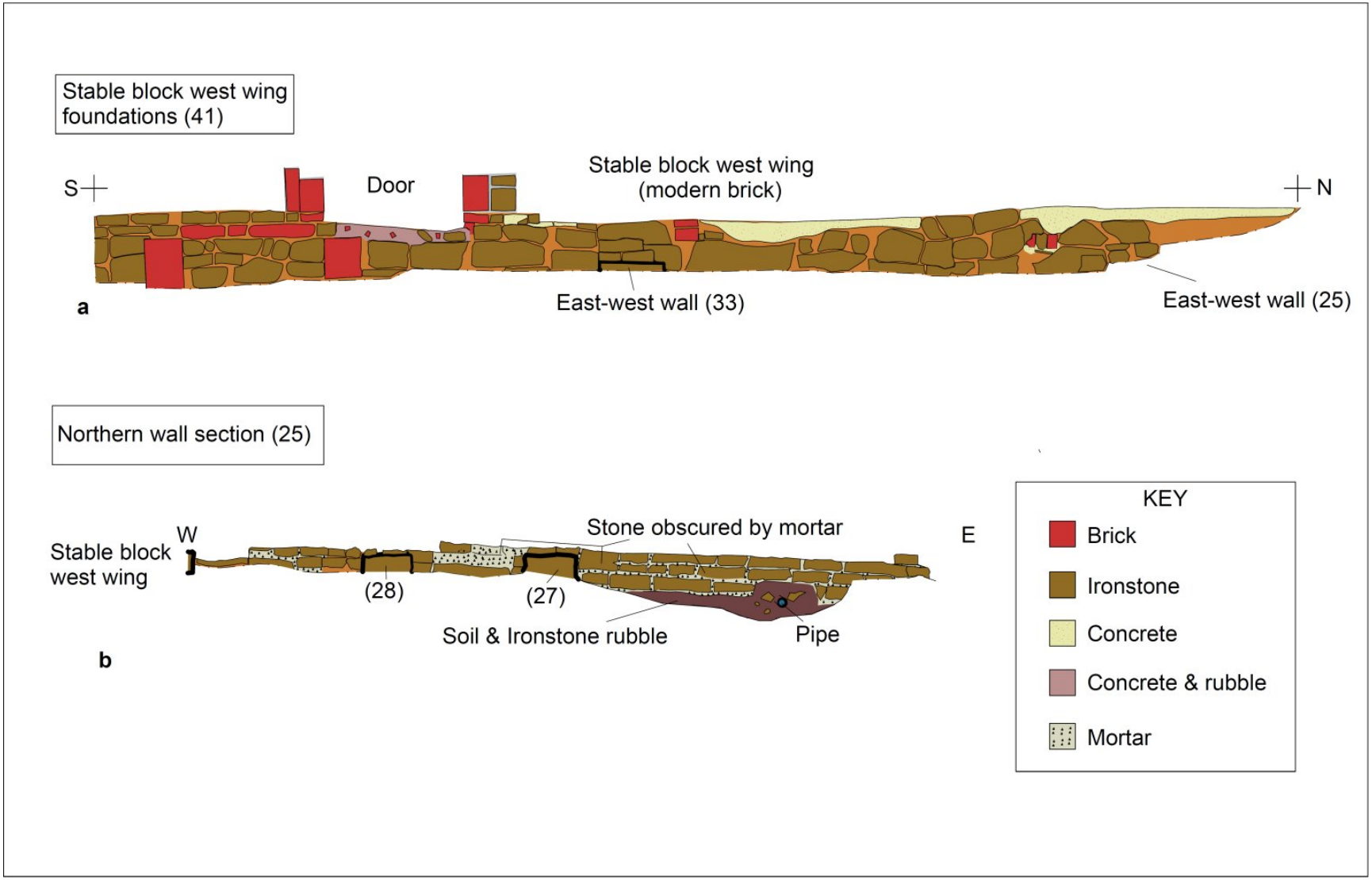

Figure 10: Sections of foundations and wall recorded in 2005

Methodology

All work will follow the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct (2014) and adhere to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations* (2014). The Leicestershire County Council Guidelines and Procedures for Archaeological work Leicestershire and Rutland was also adhered to.

A Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Work was produced by ULAS prior to the archaeological work being undertaken (Score 2016).

The work consisted of the removal of hardcore and overburden within the courtyard of the stable block and the supervision of the stripping of the surface of the remaining unreduced areas of the courtyard by an archaeologist.

The stripping was undertaken by a tracked mini-digger and a small dumper to the top of archaeology or the natural sub-stratum.

A number of test pits had been requested by a structural engineer overseeing the construction of the permanent opera house structure at various points against the walls to observe the foundations of the stable buildings. A total of 11 of these test pits were excavated; some by hand and some by hand and machine. All were photographed by the archaeologists and a sample number were recorded (Figure 11).

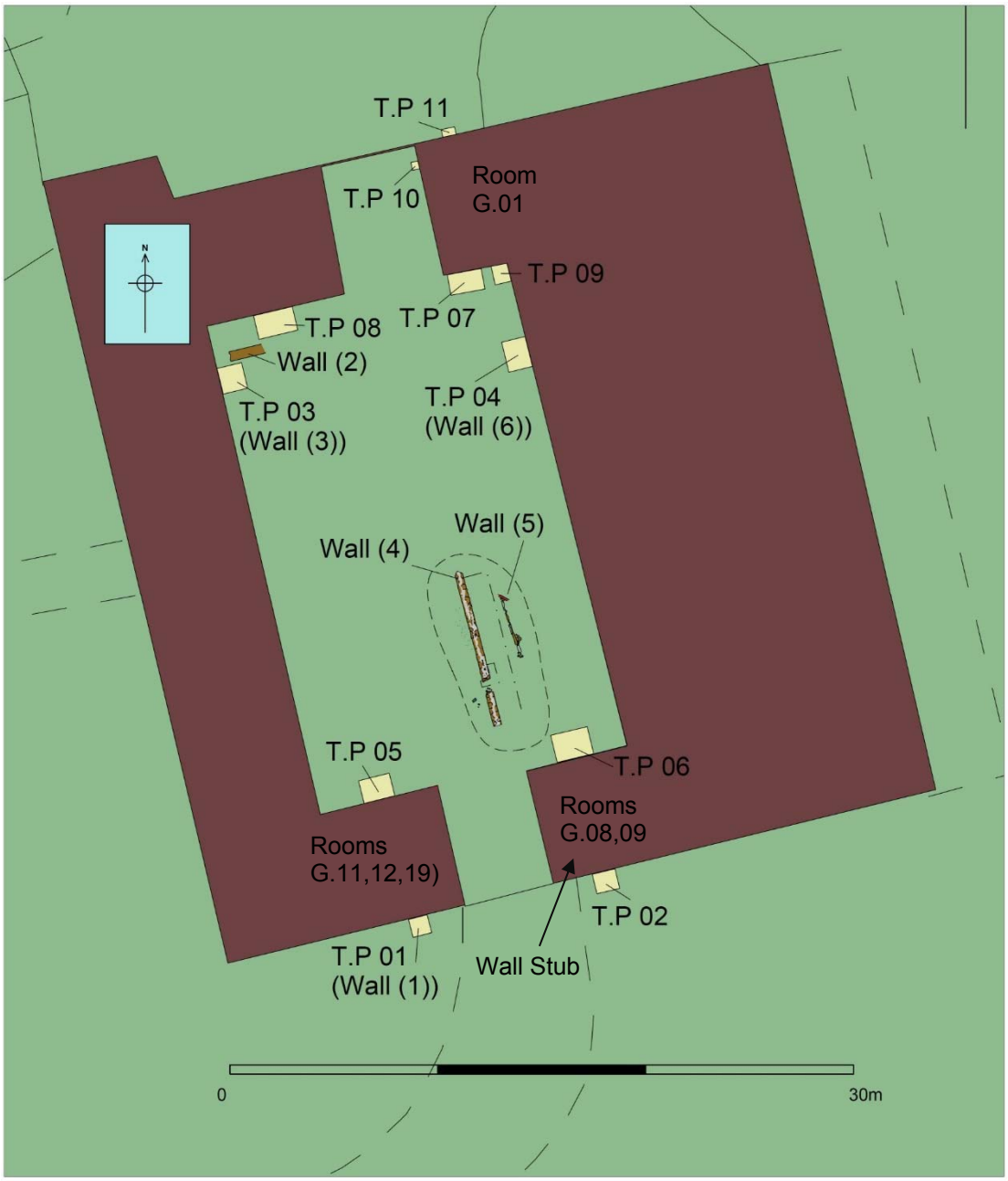

Figure 11: Plan of stable block with observed archaeological remains and test pit locations

Results

The control and supervision of the groundworks in advance of the erection of the permanent opera house structure at the stable block at Nevill Holt Hall took place between 3rd October and 10th October 2016.

A subsequent watching brief was carried out between December 2016 and January 2017 during work within the smaller rooms within the main stable building (Rooms G.01, 08,09,11,12 and 19).

The Courtyard Strip

Prior to the site being visited by an archaeologist, the temporary structure and stage had been removed and the internal seating dismantled leaving the courtyard of the stable block largely covered in granite mill waste, with areas covered in flagstones at the base of the orchestra pit and the entranceways. Much of the mill waste had been removed prior to the visit and had lain across the courtyard in a layer around 0.20m thick (Figure 12).

Figure 12: The courtyard area during removal of mill waste, looking north-west

At the edges of the courtyard were a series of anchor points, mainly in pairs 2.3m apart or closer, which had been driven into the natural sub-stratum and had held the temporary roof in place. All proved to be impossible to remove with the machines available at the time of the archaeological supervision (Figure 13).

Once most of the mill waste had been removed the courtyard area was stripped down to the top of archaeological layers, or the natural sub-stratum, whichever was the higher.

The stripping mainly moved from north to south, but after archaeological features were revealed at the southern end of the courtyard, the southern area was stripped more lightly moving broadly south to north, with changes of direction to avoid the steel anchor points (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Work in progress, looking south-east, note anchor points in foreground

At the northern end of the courtyard part of the stone wall found in the evaluations of 2005 was revealed. Originally recorded as (25), this wall was renumbered (2) for this current work (Figures 8 & 14). A section was excavated by hand through the western end of the wall in order to ascertain its construction. Lying east to west, with a gap at the western end, where it had been damaged, it consisted on 3 courses of very rough ironstone blocks of varying sizes (typically 300mm x 200mm x 100mm, but many were smaller). The outside surfaces had been better finished and they had been mortared together very firmly with creamy grey lime mortar. Although the mortar had obscured much of the stonework, it appeared that it had a rubble core of varying sized pieces of ironstone. The total visible depth was 0.28m and the width was 0.28m long (Figure 14). Its remaining length was obscured by overburden and rubble to the east. As this wall had been recorded during the previous work, no new illustrations were made.

All of the other walls or archaeological features identified during the 2005 – 2006 in the northern part of the site had been removed by the excavation of the orchestra pit and subsequent levelling for the temporary structure.

Figure 14: Western end of wall (2) revealed during courtyard strip. Previously recorded as (25), looking east

Along the western and eastern edges of the courtyard the natural substratum of yellowish-brown sandy clay and ironstone was revealed. A large slab of reinforced concrete lay close to the south-western edge of the courtyard, covering the remains of the well revealed during the earlier work here (Figure 9). Only an area of infill, surrounded by a 0.20m circle of grey clay remained of the well and the area was very disturbed at this end of the courtyard as a series of drains had been excavated here (these had been observed during the watching brief in 2006).

Across the centre of the southern part of the courtyard lay two large linear features, with areas of made-up ground (7) between them.

A section of wall, apparently the lower part of a superstructure and foundation was revealed running 8m north to south across the courtyard (4). This was clearly the wall previously seen during the watching brief of 2006 and recorded as (42) (Figures 9 and 14). This had been damaged by a ceramic and a steel pipe part-way along its length and the opportunity was taken to use this disturbance to look at its profile (Figures 15 & 16).

There were three courses in total including the foundations, which consisted of a single course of well finished rectangular ironstone blocks, around 450mm x 260mm x 150mm in size. These were clay bonded. The section through the wall appeared to show a clay bonded ironstone rubble core set within the larger lime mortar bonded blocks (Figures 17, 18, 20).

The two courses of the superstructure were of a more roughly finished ironstone, measuring approximately 400mm x 120mm x 240mm bonded with lime mortar. The foundations were 0.49m wide and the superstructure around 0.42m wide. The section revealed was 0.58m high (Figure 17 and 20a & 20b). No construction cut for the foundations was identified.

Each side of this wall in a spread around 8m long by 6m wide was a layer of mid-yellowish-brown sandy clay and ironstone (7). The layer was very similar to the surrounding sub-stratum, except for being more mixed with inclusions of brick and charcoal. It also contained a number of finds including earthenware pottery sherds, pancheon ware pottery, a piece of post-medieval glass and a number of modern artefacts, such as wall tile. To the west of the wall (4) was a patch of mortar, similar to that found during the 2005 evaluation (Figure 8; (35)).

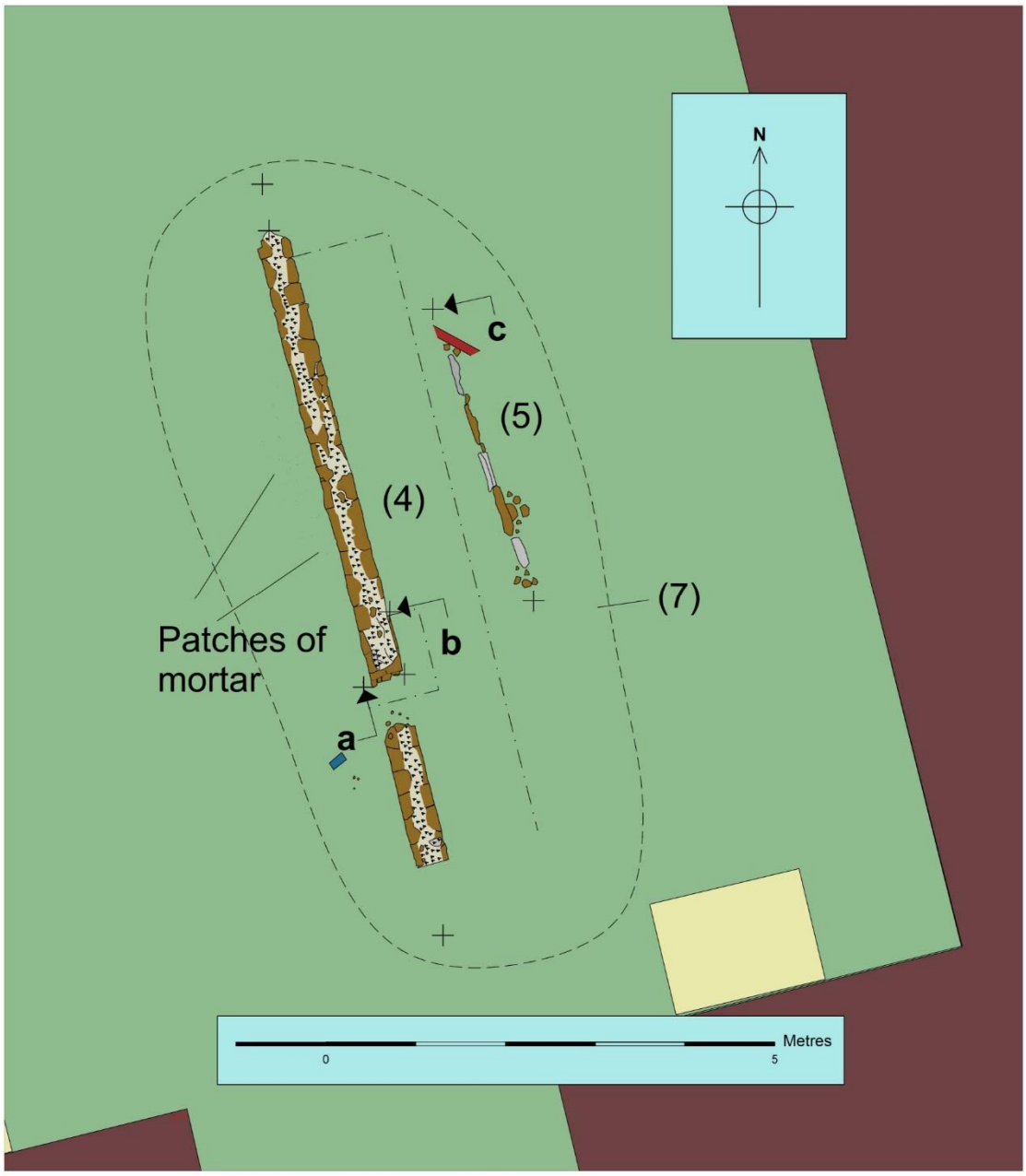

Figure 15: Plan of features (4) and (5) within courtyard area

Figure 16: Section of wall (4) revealed in southern part of courtyard, looking north-west

Figure 17: Section through damaged part of wall, showing foundations, looking north-west

Figure 18: Work in progress on courtyard walls, looking north-west

Around 1.5m east of the wall (4) was another linear stone feature, running broadly parallel with the wall, but aligned slightly more westwards (Figures 15 & 19). This feature (5) consisted of a line of pitched stones of various types, including ironstone, limestone and slate, of varying sizes and pitch. They varied between 350mm x 100mm x 90mm to 630mm x 80mm x 90mm in size and were all roughly finished. The feature as a whole was 2.6m long and around 100mm wide (Figures 15, 19 & 20c). This feature appears to be a continuation of the stone feature (45) seen in Test-pit 3 (Figure 9) that consisted of two pitched blocks of Weldon stone, lying broadly north-south across the pit and possibly continuing to the south.

No other features were identified cut into the natural substratum in the southern part of the site.

Figure 19: Pitched stone feature, looking north-west

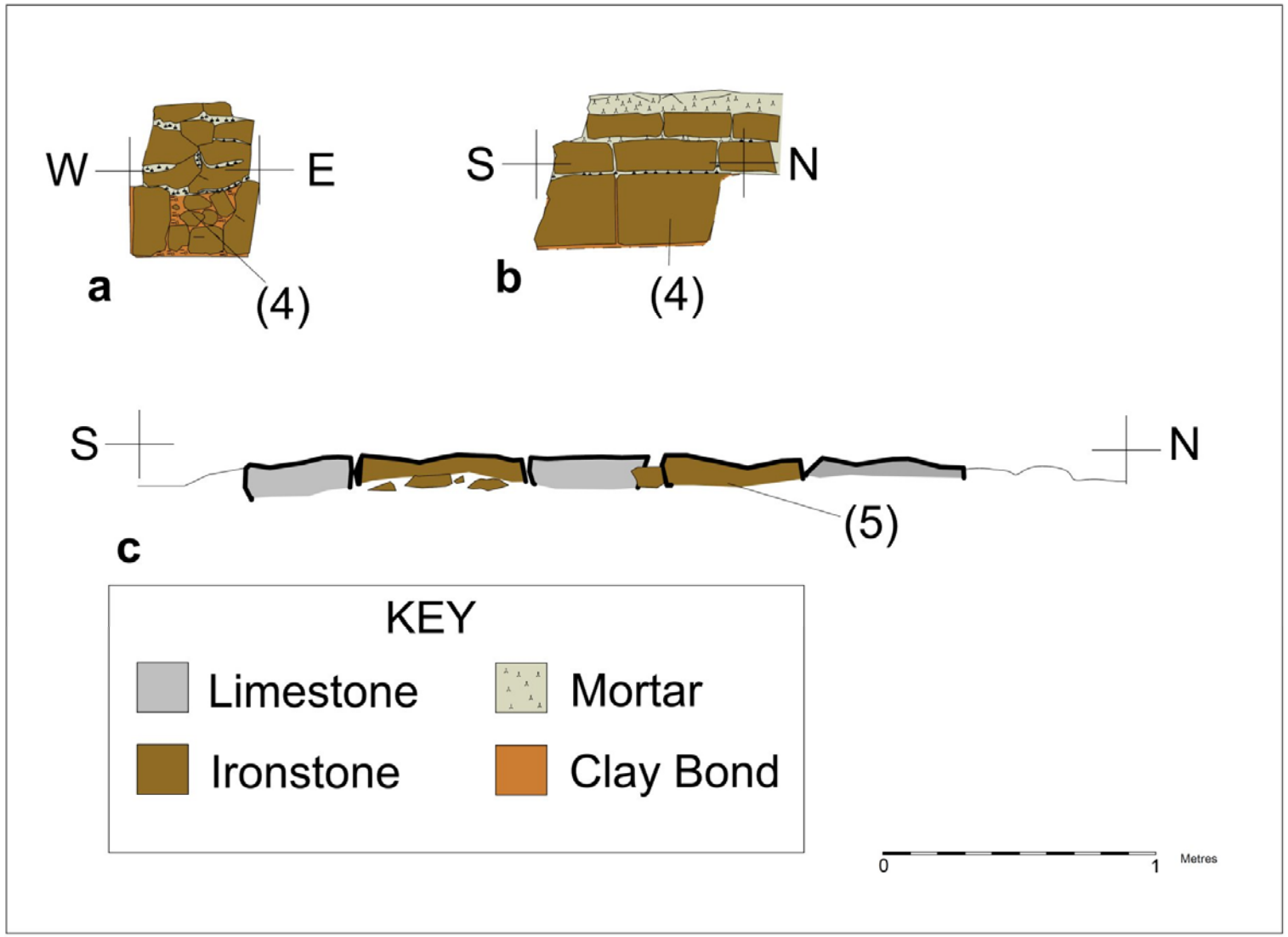

Figure 20: Features (4) and (5): Sections and elevations

Test Pits

A total of eleven test pits of varying sizes were excavated, by hand or machine, around the internal and external walls of the stable block.

Test Pits 09-11 were not fully recorded as they were either very similar to their neighbours or were merely small holes dug close to others to test similarity.

Test Pit No	Position	Length	Width	Depth	Topsoil	Subsoil	Natural
1 (Fig. 22)	External wall of SW wing	0.90m	0.90m	0.80m	Dark yellowish brown sandy clay	None	Clay and ironstone
Note: Foundation (1) recorded. Limestone. Pipe in southern part of trench							
2	External wall of SE wing	0.96m	1.10m	1.00m	Dark yellowish brown sandy clay	Mid dark yellowish brown sandy clay	Clay and ironstone
Note: Similar foundation to (1). Disturbed upper layer with hardcore and membrane							
3 (Fig. 21)	Internal wall of west wing north end	1.30m	1.20m	0.52m-0.70m	None	None	Clay and ironstone
Notes: Foundations (3) of west wing recorded. Rough Ironstone							
4 (Fig. 25)	Internal wall of east wing towards north end	1.50m	1.10m	1.10m	None	None	Clay and ironstone
Notes: Notes: Foundation (6) of east wing recorded. Limestone and ironstone							
5	Internal wall of SW wing	1.10m	1.50m	0.78m-0.80m	None	None	Clay and ironstone
Notes: Foundations underpinned with concrete and bonded hardcore							
6 (Fig. 24)	Internal wall of SE wing	1.70m	1.30m	0.80m	None	None	Clay and ironstone
Notes: Foundations underpinned with concrete and bonded hardcore							
7 (Fig. 26)	Internal wall/ entrance of NEwing	1.70m	1.00m	1.30m	None	None	Clay and ironstone
Notes: Foundations are 2 courses of brick in 3 sets with projections							
8	Internal wall/ entrance of NW wing	1.90m	1.10m	1.00m	Mid yellowish brown silty clay with charcoal and ironstone pieces	Maybe subsoil under foundations	Clay and ironstone
Notes: 0.30m of 3 course foundation of rough ironstone blocks							
9	Internal	c. 100m	c. 1.00m	c. 1.00m	-	-	-

	corner of east and NE wing						
Notes: Foundations same as TPs 07 & 04							
10	External wall entranceway NE wing	-	-	-	-	-	-
Notes: Brick foundations seen							
11	External wall NE wing	-	-	-	-	-	-
Notes: Brick foundations seen							

The test pits revealed that the west and north-west wings of the stable rested on simple rough ironstone foundations such as the section (wall (3)) recorded in TP 03 (Figures 21 & 23a). Wall (3) consisted of 4 courses of large and medium roughly finished ironstone blocks of a maximum size of 580mm x 300 mm, bonded together with clay, and were 0.82m deep. The foundations lay beneath a layer of slate, with the mortared superstructure of ironstone above. Although along this part of the wall new ironstone doorways had been recently been inserted, as during the visits of 2005-2006 the wall here was of modern brick.

The external walls of the southern wings appeared to have foundations of smaller but better finished limestone blocks, with some ironstone, which were mortared. In TP 01 the wall here (1) consisted of 9 courses in 3 sets of 3, each projecting slightly out from the course above, first by 30mm and then 90mm. The limestone blocks were of varying sizes; typically between 200mm x 80mm and 300mm x 100mm. The courses were around 0.35m deep and the entire foundation was 0.92m deep (Figures 22 & 23b).

Figure 21: Test Pit 03, post excavation showing foundations (3)

Figure 22: Test Pit 01, post excavation showing foundations (1)

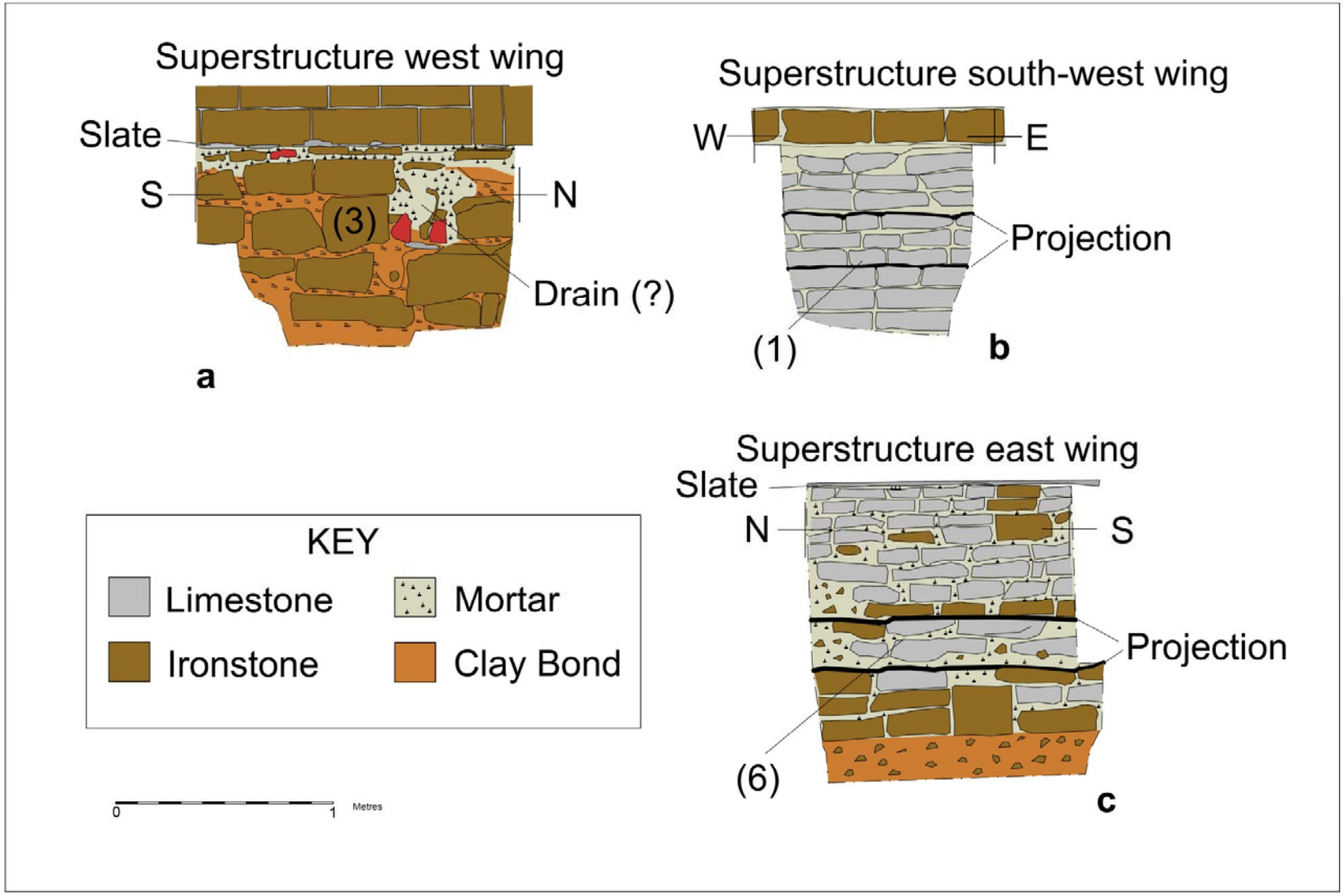

Figure 23: Test pits: Sections of foundations

Test Pit 02 showed a very similar set of foundations, with 9 courses of limestone, mortared, but with only one projection at the 7th course of 100mm. Brick and rubble hardcore lay below the limestone courses.

Test pits 05 and 06 were excavated against the walls within the courtyard of the southern wings and showed the foundations here as being underpinned by concrete (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Test Pit 06, post excavation showing concrete underpinning

The test pits along the courtyard walls of the eastern wing (Test Pit 04 and the west facing elevation of Test Pit 09), showed the foundations here comprised rough limestone and ironstone blocks of very variable sizes (Figures 23c & 25). The west facing elevation revealed in TP 04 showed that the foundations here consisted of 13 courses of sizes varying from 150mm x 60mm to 330mm x 250mm. All were very roughly finished apart from a single large well- finished square block of ironstone, which resembled that used in the foundation of wall (4) within the courtyard. All were mortared with creamy grey lime mortar. There were three sets of courses; the first of 8, the next of 2 and the final lower course of 3, with a step between each group. The total depth of the foundation was 1.13m.

The foundations of the north-east wing, as seen in Test Pits 07, 10, 11 and the south facing elevation of TP 09 were of brick, below a brick plinth. The foundations were in 2 sets of 3 courses with projections between each course (Figure 26).

Figure 25: Test Pit 04, post excavation showing foundations (6)

Figure 26: Test Pit 07, post excavation showing brick foundations

Watching Brief

A watching brief took place on the 7th of December 2016 to observe the reduction of the floor level within Room G.01 to create a set of stairs down to the orchestra pit and below stage area. Room G.01 is located in the north-eastern corner of the stable block (see Figure 11).

Room G.01 is an extension built against the northern end of the east range of stable buildings. It is a later phase of building than the other ranges and is built of brick with an ironstone skin and detailing to match the rest of the stables. It appears to have been built to house a large iron water tank at first floor level. The building stands on thick and wide brick foundations with at least 1m of concrete beneath the bricks laid in order to support the massive weight of the full water tank.

A 0.2m layer of cement flooring was removed to reveal a mixed layer of sandy clay extending down to approximately 0.6m below the cement floor level. After breaking through the brick threshold doorway and removing approximately 0.5m of the concrete wall foundation a mini digger fitted with a ditching bucket reduced the ground within the room to 1.1m below the cement floor level. This revealed a clean mid yellowish brown silty sandy clay which appeared to be undisturbed apart from a modern cut on the eastern side of the room. There was also evidence of the foundation cut for the walls. Two small test pits, one in the north-east corner and one to the west were excavated to 1.6m below floor level continued to expose the undisturbed silty sandy clay (Figure 27).

No archaeological features were found during this watching brief.

A further watching brief took place on the 6th of January 2017 to observe the floor reduction of the rooms to the east and west of the southern archway leading into the stable courtyard.
The western room floor (G.11,12,19) was reduced using a ditching bucket to approximately 0.6m below the original floor level down to the present reduced height of the inner courtyard. Once the 20th century flooring and make-up was removed the natural ironstone and ironstone brash was revealed. No traces of earlier floors or walls were observed. The stepped foundations of the existing walls were exposed and shown to be cutting into the natural.

The eastern room (G.08,09) had already had the modern flooring removed and required a further reduction to bring it down to the same level as in the western room. The stub of an ironstone wall running from north to south was seen in the south-west corner of the room approximately 0.4m from the west wall. Only the bottom two courses survived, both of which partially cut into the natural. The wall was extremely insubstantial and petered out approximately 3m from the south wall of the room. This wall was not as wide as the stepped foundations of the present building so is likely to be earlier (Figure 28). No other features or dating evidence was observed.

Figure 27: Reduced floor level in G.01. Looking north-east

Figure 28: Wall remnant in south-east room (G.09), looking west

Conclusion

The buildings at Nevill Holt Hall and its associated stable block have a long and complex history. The stable block has its origins in the 17th century with the west wing constructed in 1661after the demolition of the earlier stables. It was constructed to the south-east of the main hall, according to the 1661 map, in the area previously occupied by an earlier hospital or almshouse. The stable was extended significantly during the 19th century and into the 20th, with the buildings being used as a school throughout most of the 20th century, all parts of the buildings appear to have undergone significant change and modification.

The recent archaeological monitoring of the renovation works at Nevill Holt Hall and stables reflect these changes with several complex phases being revealed and with ancient and modern material existing side by side. Although the 2005-6 work identified a possible medieval pit (13th – 14th century), no further archaeology dating to this period was identified.

The test pits against the stable walls show that the simplest foundations are those of the 17th century west wing, consisting of rough ironstone blocks. These also seem to be in evidence under the south facing side of the north-west wing, suggesting that this section of the stable is also fairly early, or possibly built using earlier structures as foundations. The foundations of the southern and eastern wings are mainly of limestone construction and far more sophisticated, if not more substantial, than the west wing. The southern inner walls appeared to have been underpinned with concrete in recent times, possibly due to deterioration of the original structure.

The most modern of the foundations are the brick courses under the north-eastern wing, which also contains a large metal water tank.

A series of stone walls on a similar alignment to the current stable buildings were discovered during the archaeological work of 2005-2006, within the stable courtyard, along with pits, yard areas and other feature that could not be closely dated. The current work did not reveal any new features, but did show that much of the archaeological remains found in 2005-2006 had been damaged or removed by the subsequent work carried out for the temporary opera house building.

The current work revealed the remains of the north-south wall (42) seen during the previous work, which, renumbered as (4) here, was recorded in more detail. The wall as well-made with shallow if substantial foundations of worked ironstone blocks and appears to be of better construction than the east-west walls seen during the earlier phases of work; features (25), (31) and (33) etc. However, the superstructure is of very similar construction to these walls, being of roughly work ironstone, bonded with mortar with a bonded rubble core. It is possible that the east-west walls may have been internal to the structure and therefore did not need substantial foundations.

A further small section of wall was discovered in Room G.09 during the watching brief. This appears to be on a similar alignment to (42), running north to south but does not appear to be continuation of it. Very little of this wall survived and no dating evidence was found for this section of wall.

Whether these walls do represent the earlier hospital building cannot be fully determined as there they lie on the same alignment to the 17th century structure and may be related to the west wing in some way. However, there is no reason why both buildings may have been on the same alignment and the west wing may have been built here in order to re-use the existing foundations of the hospital. Artefacts range from the

post-medieval to the modern period, which reflects the confused nature of the site, with many intrusions and disturbances from drains and other services of different periods. There is no clear date for the construction of the hospital, although Hill (1997, 69) believes that it most likely dates from the arrival of Sir Thomas Nevill in 1591.

The previous work postulated that the north-south oriented walls (34), (42) represent the outer wall of a building, with the rough cobbled areas (40) possibly representing a yard area or pathway outside the building. The finds evidence from this yard area gives a 16th century date. There is no evidence of the ground plan of the hospital, or any convincing idea of its exact size, but if these walls are the outer reaches of the building this would make it approximately 8-10m wide. The full length of the building is impossible to determine and the southern end of the hospital may lie under the present southern end of the stable block, or may have been destroyed by the 19th century extensions to the stable building. This may also be the case with the northernmost extents and there is evidence that at least part of the earlier building continues under the northwest wing.

The smaller series of walls running east to west across the courtyard (25)-(28) and (33) are mortared, unlike the broader foundations (34) and (41). Their relative size and position suggests that they could be internal walls, although the southernmost north-south wall (42) is of a similar construction and much thinner than (34), onto which it seems to link. It is also unclear what wall (26) represents. Given that the corner (31) appears to be an outer wall and (25) the northernmost wall of the building, wall (26) appears tacked on to the main building.

The nearby stone feature (5) lies in the same alignment as the surfaces (40) and (45) seen during the 2005-2006 work and is most likely an extant section of it. This surface appears to be on a similar alignment to the walls and may represent the remains of a yard surface. This is undated but could be related to the presumed hospital walls as there is no evidence for a surface to the west which would be the interior of the building.

Some evidence of mortar layers were found during the previous work and the current observations, mainly to the west of the walls, which may indicate the remnants of an inner floor surface here, although they could just as easily been due to demolition and trample.

Although no new discoveries were made during the current archaeological monitoring of the groundworks associated with the proposed new structure at the stables, a number of known archaeological features were examined in more detail. Although the date and origins of the walls discovered within the courtyard are unclear they obviously, at least in part, pre-date the earliest phases of the stable block. They are also broadly in the right place to be the remnants of the 'Hospitall' shown on the map of 1661. Although some of the walls vary in their construction this may be evidence of different phases within the hospital building itself. A steward's letter of 1639 refers to its use as storage (Hill 1997 after Gamble 1985), so it is plausible that these small internal walls represent later changes and adaptations.

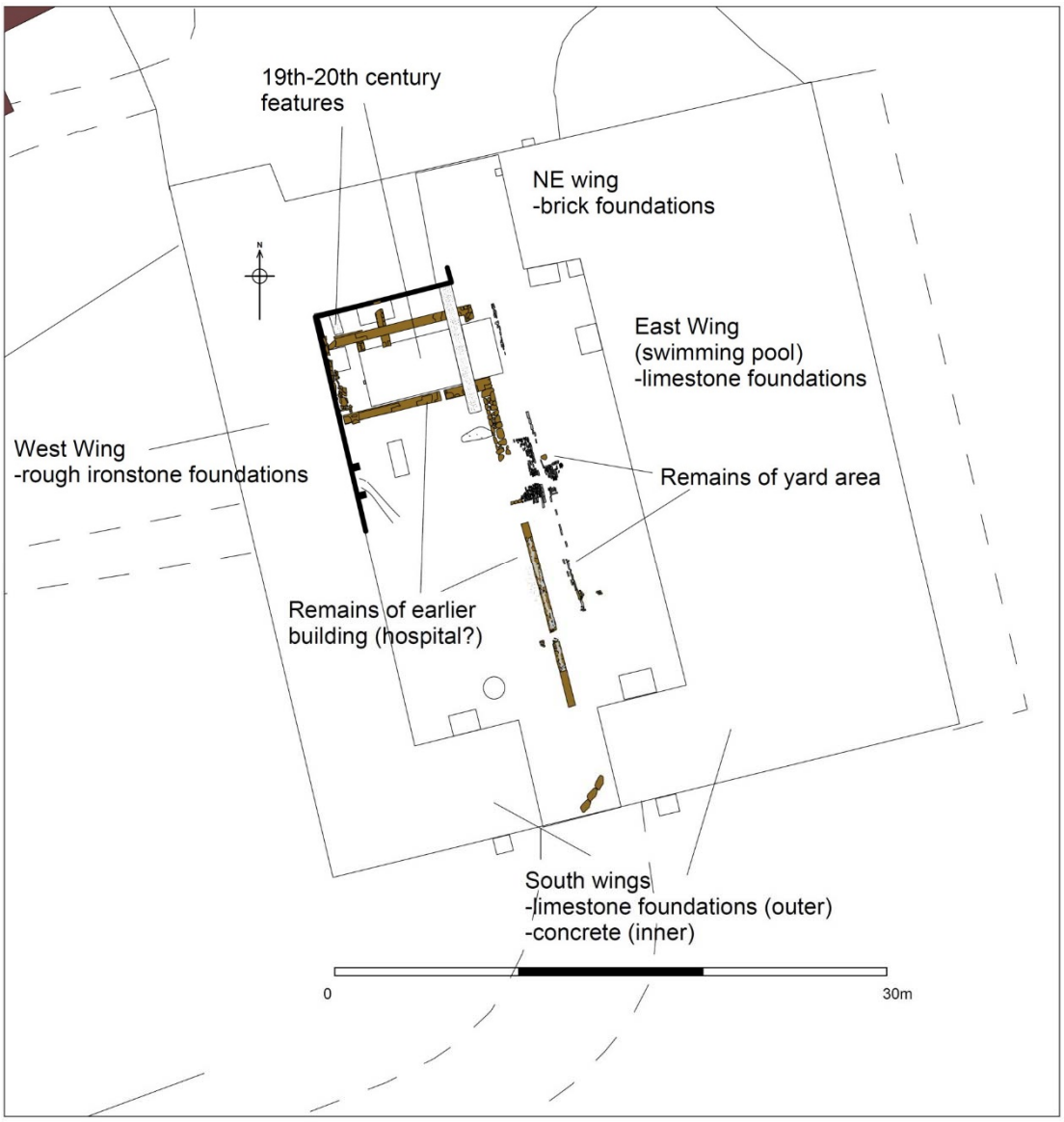

Figure 29: Plan of stable block with archaeological features and observations highlighted

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Acknowledgements

ULAS would like to thank David Ross and Rural Solutions Planning Consultants for the work. Thanks are also due to WWW Brown and sons for their help and co-operation with this work.

The archaeological work was carried out by Leon Hunt, Richard Huxley and Andrew Hyam and the project was managed for ULAS by Vicki Score.

Archive

The archive for this project will be deposited with Leicestershire Museums with accession number X.A112.2016 and consists of the following:

1 Unbound copy of this report (No. 2016-142)

4 Watching brief recording sheets

4 A4 Test Pits recording sheets (recording 8 test pits)

6 Masonry Recording sheets

1 Layer sheet

1 Drawing index

3 A3 sheets of permatrace containing primary drawings

1 Photographic Index

1 CD of digital photographs

1 Contact sheet of digital photographs

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20-10-2016

Updated 22-08-2017

Appendix I: Post Roman finds - Deborah Sawday

The Finds

Methodology

The pottery, six sherds, weighing 143 grams and representing four vessels with a vessel rim equivalent of 0.175 (calculated by adding together the circumference of the surviving rim sherds, where one vessel equals 1.00) was examined under a x20 binocular microscope and catalogued with reference to current guidelines (MPRG 1998, MPRG 2016) and the ULAS fabric series (Sawday 1989; Sawday 2009). Also present were fragments of iron, post medieval glass and modern wall tile. The results are shown below (Table 1).

Discussion

The wheel thrown Earthenware, fabric EA2, is widely distributed across the county and dates from the post medieval into the modern period. A flared bowl similar to that found here was dated to the eighteenth century at the West Bridge area of Leicester (Sawday 1994, fig71.47) whilst the pancheons, which also made up part of this small assemblage, were paralleled at Causeway Lane, Leicester in association with a clay pipe kiln dump dated from *circa* 1820, (Davies and Sawday 1999, fig.97.182).

Conclusion

The pottery was in good condition with little evidence of abrasion and had a relatively large average sherd weight of 23.8 grams. Several co-joining sherds were also present. However, fabric EA2 is not closely dated as noted above, and the other finds, ranged from the post medieval to the modern – suggesting that these are not from a securely stratified context.

Table 1: The pottery by context, fabric/ware, sherd number, weight (grams), and EVES.

Context	Fabric/ware	no	Gr	EVE	Comments
POT					
7 make up	EA2 – Earthenware 2	2	90	0.075	Wide mouthed bowl/pancheon rim, spilled and glazed on interior. External diameter c.500mm. Joining sherds
7	EA2	1	22	0.025	Bowl/pancheon rim fragment, slipped, a line of glaze shows how the glaze was painted on to the exterior wall and the top of the rim. Estimated external diameter c.520mm
7	EA2	2	25	0.075	Simple everted rim from a flared bowl, slipped internally and externally, glaze runs on interior wall and rim. Estimated external diameter c.200mm. Joining sherds.
7	EA2	1	6		Internally slipped and glazed body sherd.
MISC.					
7	Iron object	1			Iron and iron stone – both have been subjected to heat!
7	Plaster/tile	1			Modern wall tile
7	Glass	1			Glass fragment, post medieval.

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Appendix II: OASIS data entry

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work through the *Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service at the University of York.

A summary of the work will also be submitted for publication in a suitable regional archaeological journal in due course.

PROJECT DETAILS	**Oasis No**	universi1-266086		
	Project Name	Archaeological work at The Stable Block, Nevill Holt Hall, Nevill Holt, Leicestershire (SP 816 937)		
	Start/end dates of field work	03-10-2016 to 10-10-2016		
	Previous/Future Work	Yes/No		
	Project Type	Strip, map and sample excavation		
	Site Status	Grade II* listed building		
	Current Land Use	Hall and grounds		
	Monument Type/Period	Post-medieval		
	Significant Finds/Period	Pottery post-medieval & modern		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
	Planning Ref.	-		
PROJECT LOCATION	**Site Address/Postcode**	Stable Block, Nevill Holt Hall, Nevill Holt, Leicestershire		
	Study Area	410m²		
	Site Coordinates	SP 816 937		
	Height OD	c. 140m		
PROJECT CREATORS	**Organisation**	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority (LCC)		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	Vicki Score		
	Project Director/Supervisor	Leon Hunt		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Rural Solutions Planning Consultants		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		**Physical**	**Digital**	**Paper**
	Recipient	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service	LCC Museum service
	ID (Acc. No.)	X.A112.2016	X.A112.2016	X.A112.2016
	Contents	Pottery, glass, tile	Photographs	Report Site Notes Drawings
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	**Type**	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	Archaeological work at The Stable Block, Nevill Holt Hall, Nevill Holt, Leicestershire (SP 816 937)		
	Author	Hunt, L		
	Other bibliographic	ULAS Report No 2016-142		

	details	
	Date	2016
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester
	Description	Developer Report A4 pdf

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